

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-08

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FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6030

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 MOSCOW 20423

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PEPR, UR, YO
SUBJECT: PROSPECTS FOR POST-TITO YUGOSLAVIA

1. EMBASSY HAS BEEN ASKED FOR ITS COMMENTS ON AN OUTLINE PREVIOUSLY PROVIDED. INR IS REQUESTED TO BRING THIS CABLE TO THE ATTENTION OF THE NIO FOR USSR-EE BY COB AUGUST 25. FROM OUR PERSPECTIVE, MANY OF THE QUESTIONS POSED ARE UNANSWERABLE EXCEPT ON A HIGH SPECULATIVE BASIS, AND WE OFFER OUR COMMENTS IN THAT SPIRIT. WE WILL DEAL WITH QUESTIONS IN THE ORDER THEY WERE POSED.

2. PARA 3, SECTION E, QUESTIONS 1 AND 3: WE ARE NOT AWARE OF ANY RECENT PARTY-TO-PARTY CONTACTS MADE BY THE SOVIETS AT THE REPUBLIC LEVEL OR OF SOVIET EFFORTS TO CULTIVATE ONE OR ANOTHER YUGOSLAV LEADER. WE HAVE THE IMPRESSION THAT THE SOVIET MEDIA TREATS PROMINENT YUGOSLAV LEADERS EVENHANDEDLY, WITHOUT PARTICULAR FAVORITISM TOWARDS ONE OR ANOTHER. WE HAVE NO INFORMATION ON SOVIET SUCCESS IN DEVELOPING ASSETS IN THE YUGOSLAV MILITARY ESTABLISHMENT AND LEAVE IT TO EMBASSY BELGRADE TO COMMENT ON OTHER
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QUESTIONS POSED.

3. PARA 3, SECTION E, QUESTION 5: IN THE IMMEDIATE POST-TITO PHASE THE SOVIETS WILL ALMOST CERTAINLY SEEK TO EXERT INFLUENCE IN BELGRADE TO PREVENT A SHARP TURN TO THE WEST. WE SUSPECT THAT THE USSR IS NOT WHOLLY CONFIDENT OF ITS POSITION IN YUGO-

SLAVIA AND ITS FIRST EFFORTS WILL BE DIRECTED AGAINST PREVENTING (INSOFAR AS THIS WILL BE POSSIBLE) THE EMERGENCE OF AN ANTI-SOVIET LEADERSHIP GROUP IN BELGRADE. SOVIET BEHAVIOR AFTER THE VICTORY OF THE JANATA COALITION IN INDIA IN 1977 MAY BE SUGGESTIVE OF HOW MOSCOW WILL DEAL WITH THE YUGOSLAV SITUATION. SHORTLY AFTER MRS. GHANDI'S DEFEAT, GROMYKO WENT TO INDIA AND THE SOVIETS IN THIS AND A VARIETY OF OTHER WAYS REMINDED THE POST-GHANDI GOVERNMENT OF THE MUTUAL BENEFITS OF MAINTAINING CLOSE RELATIONS. THE SOVIETS WERE ABLE TO CARRY OFF THE TRANSITION TO A NEW GOVERNMENT IN INDIA WITH RELATIVELY LITTLE DIFFICULTY BECAUSE INDIA SOUGHT TO PRESERVE ITS NON-ALIGNED POSITION AND SAFEGUARD ITS ECONOMIC TIES WITH THE USSR. THE SOVIETS PROBABLY HOPE THAT SIMILAR CALCULATIONS WILL DETER BELGRADE FROM SIGNIFICANTLY REORIENTING ITS POLICIES AFTER TITO'S DEATH, AND WILL PROBABLY USE STATE VISITS, PROMISES OF AID, AND APPEALS TO YUGOSLAV SELF-INTEREST AS A MEANS OF CHECKING ANY DRIFT TOWARD THE WEST. WE DOUBT THAT AT THIS EARLY STAGE MOSCOW WOULD BE LIKELY TO THREATEN TO USE FORCE.

4. IF FACTIONALISM AND REGIONALISM SHOULD SURFACE, THE SOVIETS WOULD PROBABLY SEEK TO ASSESS THE STRENGTH OF THESE TRENDS AND THE LIKELY DIRECTION
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THAT THEY WERE MOVING BEFORE TAKING ANY ACTION, PARTICULARLY IF, AS SUGGESTED, THESE TRENDS FELL SHORT OF A SERIOUS CRISIS. THE SOVIETS WOULD TEND TO BE BOTH PRAGMATIC AND OPPORTUNISTIC IN DEALING WITH SUCH TRENDS. IN THE LAST ANALYSIS, AND BARRING THE EMERGENCE OF A POST-TITO REGIME WITH STRONG ANTI-SOVIET VIEWS, THE USSR WOULD PROBABLY PREFER TO KEEP YUGOSLAVIA UNITED. NONETHELESS, THEY WOULD TRY TO EXPLOIT STRONG FACTIONALISM AND REGIONALISM, ESPECIALLY IF THESE TRENDS OFFERED THE OPPORTUNITY TO WORK TOWARD A UNITED YUGOSLAVIA POLITICALLY CLOSER TO THE USSR. IT WOULD FOLLOW THAT, IF A LOCAL LEADER SHOWED AN INCLINATION TO ALIGN HIMSELF WITH THE USSR, THE SOVIETS WOULD PROBABLY BE TEMPTED TO ASSIST HIM, ESPECIALLY IF THEY FELT THAT HE STOOD A GOOD CHANCE OF GAINING CONTROL OVER THE POLITICAL LEVERS OF A UNITED YUGOSLAVIA.

5. CLEARLY THE SOVIETS WOULD SEE THEIR OBJECTIVES IN POST-TITO YUGOSLAVIA UNDERMINED BY A NEW LEADERSHIP WHICH SHARPLY INCREASED THE COUNTRY'S TIES WITH THE WEST. THE REAL QUESTION IS WHAT WOULD THE SOVIETS DO ABOUT THIS, AND WE ASSUME (AS SUGGESTED ABOVE) THAT

THE VARIOUS POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC LEVERS THAT THE USSR HAS AT ITS DISPOSAL WOULD BE EXPLOITED AT THAT TIME IN AN EFFORT TO CHECK A WESTWARD DRIFT.

6. PARA 3, SECTION E, QUESTION 6. THE TIMING OF THE LEADERSHIP CHANGES COULD BE CRUCIAL. IF THE POST-BREZHNEV SUCCESSION DOES NOT GO SMOOTHLY, IS MARKED BY A LENGTHY INTERREGNUM WITH CONTENDING FACTIONS, SOVIET ABILITY TO EMBARK ON ANY NEW STEPS ABROAD WILL BE SHARPLY DIMINISHED. ON THE QUESTION

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OF WHICH SOVIET LEADER THE YUGOSLAVS WOULD PREFER TO DEAL WITH, THE NATURE OF THE POST-BREZHNEV LEADERSHIP WOULD HAVE TO BE KNOWN BEFORE ANY INFORMED COMMENTS COULD BE OFFERED. THE BREZHNEV LEADERSHIP HAS PROVEN ITSELF CAPABLE OF DECISIVE ACTION WHEN IT FEELS ITS INTERESTS DIRECTLY THREATENED, BUT ALSO FLEXIBLE ENOUGH TO USE POLITICAL INSTRUMENTS RATHER THAN NAKED FORCE IN MOST CASES. IN THAT RESPECT, A KNOWN QUANTITY WOULD PROBABLY BE EASIER FOR THE YUGOSLAVS TO DEAL WITH THAN A NEW SOVIET LEADERSHIP WHOSE RESPONSES WERE NOT YET FULLY TESTED. TOON

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